

The Pipeline

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CFC Targeted in Suit Over Lesbian's Firing

By Mike Jennings, CFC Communications

A lawsuit filed by a lesbian who was fired from her job as a youth counselor claims the Cabinet for Families and Children supports religiously based discrimination through its payments to the Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children.

The woman, Alicia Pedreira, and seven other plaintiffs also claim the Baptist Homes use state resources to instill religious teachings in children who are placed in their care by CFC and the Kentucky Justice Cabinet.

The suit, filed April 17 in federal district court in Louisville, asks for an end to state funding for jobs at the Baptist Homes and a ban on the homes' policy of barring lesbians and gay men from employment. It also seeks compensation from the Baptist Homes for Pedreira, who was fired in October 1998 from her job at Spring Meadows Children's Home in Middletown.

Pedreira counseled emotionally disturbed young men at the facility. She was fired after a photograph of her and her partner was taken at an AIDS Walk in Louisville and displayed at the Kentucky State Fair.

While the suit casts CFC as a co-defendant with the Kentucky Baptist Homes, the cabinet has made it clear for the past year and a half that it disapproves of the discriminatory employment policy and its likely impact on children. In a letter written in March 1999, Bonnie Hommrich, deputy commissioner for community based services, told Kentucky Baptist Homes President William Smithwick that the policy posed an obstacle to the effective treatment of children who were victims of sexual abuse or had doubts about their sexual identity.

"No other human services agencies that we know of have policies permitting employment discrimination against homosexuals," Hommrich wrote. "The question that needs to be asked is whether Baptist Homes for Children wants to continue to be out of the mainstream of current hiring practices in the human services field . . ."

The lawsuit hinges on the U.S. constitution's ban on establishment of religion and civil rights laws that address religiously based discrimination. The American Civil Liberties

Union backs the suit and says it could help shape the national debate over whether religious groups that discriminate should receive public funds.

Since the lawsuit threat arose, cabinet officials have repeatedly urged the ACLU and Baptist Homes to iron out their differences. Secretary Viola Miller has stated: "We are concerned about the conflict between the KBHC employment policy and the Social Work Code of Ethics," which says social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate with discrimination. Sexual orientation is among the grounds for discrimination expressly forbidden by the code.

The cabinet's current contract with the Kentucky Baptist Homes expires June 30.

Kentucky Baptist Homes' shelters, youth ranches and foster homes currently care for about 290 children who are in CFC custody and about 50 who are in the custody of the Justice Cabinet's Department of Juvenile Justice. The Kentucky Baptist Homes' budget came to \$19 million in 1999, and state funds accounted for most of that amount.

We Can't Hear When You're Shouting

By Lisa Aug, CFC Communications



Apologies to and thanks for the patience of CFC personnel staff disturbed by excess noise during construction of the 5th floor executive pod this week. Apparently the exhaust fan was running full blast to compensate for the dust and odors of the drywall hanging, and at the same time, technicians working on the phone system were yelling to make themselves heard over the fan noise. Nearby personnel staff, already squashed to make room for the construction, could not hear their own phone conversations.

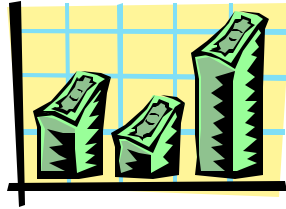
We have reminded the phone techs that people are trying to work on the other side of the plastic sheets, and the fan noise should diminish once workers finish hanging drywall, which should be no later than April 24.

Meanwhile, the Division of Child Support move from the First City Complex to Schenkel Lane continues on schedule to finish by April 28. No other CFC moves that affect finance and accounting staff will take place until after state and federal fiscal year close-outs.

Budget Outcome A Welcome Surprise

By Mike Jennings, CFC Communications

The state budget that passed on the final day of the 2000 General Assembly lifted much of the gloom that pervaded CFC—as well as other sectors of state government—during the lengthy battle over taxes and spending that preceded it.



Instead of a no-new-money budget, which had seemed likely as the session approached its close, the cabinet got enough money to continue all current services and make some key upgrades in services, subsidies and employee pay.

Family Resource and Youth Services Centers got enough new money—\$4.2 million in the biennium's first year, \$8.3 million in the second—to open 47 new centers in each year and to increase the funding rate for existing centers for the first time. Funding for the 649 existing centers, which has stood at an annual \$200 per child since the centers' inception in 1991, will increase to \$205 in 2001 and \$210 in 2002.

Other highlights of the cabinet's budget include:

- State funds needed to access 100 percent of available federal child care funds. The total increase comes to \$2.2 million in 2001 and \$4.1 million in 2002.
- \$9.6 million in 2001 and \$12.2 million in 2002 to increase Foster Care, Adoption Subsidy and Private Child Care rates.
- Early Childhood initiative funds for increasing subsidy levels and improving the quality of day care in Kentucky.
- Funding for a Model Early Childhood Development Center (\$850,000 in 2001 and \$895,000 in 2002).
- Funds to build and operate nine new Children's Advocacy Centers in the first year and another four in the second (\$675,000 in 2001 and \$1 million in 2002).
- An increase in funding for Domestic Violence Centers (\$1.1 million each year).
- A 2.4 percent cost of living increase for State Supplementation clients (\$357,000 in 2001 and \$763,000 in 2002).
- Capital construction funds for maintenance needs, for interior renovations in Owensboro, for elevator improvements in the L&N Building in Louisville and for a system upgrade for Disability Determinations.

Cabinet employees can expect salary increments each year of the biennium. The cabinet's budget also includes wage equity money—\$2.9 million in 2001 and \$4.2 million in 2002—to improve salary levels for employees who are most drastically underpaid.

Ten-Ure 2000

Cabinet for Families and Children employees who want to attend the Ten-Ure convention May 24-26 in Owensboro:



- Must use annual or compensatory leave for the Wednesday social activities;
- May code time spent at the Thursday and Friday sessions as regular working hours;
- May code time spent traveling to and from the convention as regular working hours, if the travel is within the regular work day, but may not count any travel time as overtime;
- Must code all time spent at the convention, apart from travel and attendance at sessions, as annual or compensatory leave.

Room reservations for the convention should be made no later than May 8 by calling the Executive Inn Rivermont at 800-626-1936. Daily rates for those identifying themselves as convention attendees are \$59 per room.

To qualify for early bird drawings leading to cash prizes, please send in a pre-registration form, survey and ballot by May 5.

The conference will include workshops on team building, stress management, retirement, personnel matters, the accreditation process, the Workforce Investment Act, financial planning and simplified access.

Ten-Ure is an organization of state employees with at least 10 years of Kentucky state employment.

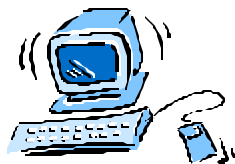


Frankfort Area Notes and Activities

- Two sessions on services provided by the Kentucky Public Employees' Deferred Compensation Authority will be held in the Health Services auditorium June 7. Jolene VanHorne, a representative of the Authority, will present information at 10 a.m. and again at 2 p.m.

Helpful Web Sites

Compiled by Margaret Davis Harney



If you've found a helpful site you would like to share in this column, e-mail it to <mailto:margaret.harney@mail.state.ky.us>.

(*Note: This column is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to be an endorsement for any site or its content.*)

New to the CFC Web Site

<http://cfc-chs.chr.state.ky.us/cfc/dcb/dsr/directory/directory.htm> – Community Based Services' online **Directory of Service Regions**, is the latest addition to the CFC Web site.

The directory includes addresses, and phone and fax numbers by region for administrators, associates, and supervisors. Contact information is also included for every local Family Support and Protection and Permanency office in the state.

Remember to also check out these other recent additions to the CFC Web site:

<http://cfc-chs.chr.state.ky.us/kipda/index.htm> – Community Based Services' **KIPDA** Jefferson Regional site was officially launched April 13.

<http://cfc-chs.chr.state.ky.us/cbs-dpp-pandp> – The CFC Division of **Protection and Permanency** policy site, officially posted in March, is a comprehensive source of information and client tracking for P and P staff.

CFC Passes March of Dimes Goal By 18%

Nineteen walkers from the Cabinet for Families and Children representing dozens of donors raised \$1,544.48 during the March of Dimes WalkAmerica April 14. The weather was cool but not chilly – just right for a brisk walk around the Capitol to burn off the free pizza and popcorn.

CFC exceeded its goal of \$1,300 by 18.8 percent.

"I want to thank everyone who made donations and helped collect the money," said Charlene Nation, CFC coordinator for WalkAmerica. "Without you, our goal could not have been reached.

"If this amount will help just one little baby to survive, we have won a battle. Thank you so much!"

COA Site Visit Schedule

By Lisa Aug, CFC Communications

Peer reviewers for the National Council on Accreditation will be visiting and evaluating CFC Service Regions three more times over the next two months. Reviewers visited and evaluated Quality Central as well as KIPDA Rural and KIPDA Jefferson this week, and we all survived to tell about it. So remember – it's a challenge and an opportunity. Here is the schedule:

May 15-19 – Purchase, Pennyriple, Green River, Barren River, Lincoln Trail

June 5-9 – Northern Kentucky, Gateway/Buffalo Trace, FIVCO, Big Sandy and Kentucky River.

June 19-23 – Bluegrass Fayette, Bluegrass Rural, Cumberland Valley and Lake Cumberland



Zenda Jones, Charlene Nation and Nicole Rodgers charging up the hill on the back leg of the March of Dimes WalkAmerica, April 14.